

FAQs on SAFE framework (updated on 04 Sep 2023)

[General]

1. Why was there a change in SAFE's implementation timeline?

In view of feedback received from the industry and to allow more time for the industry to prepare for the transition, the SAFE framework will be implemented in 2025. SFA will in the meantime continue to engage the industry on the framework and work with them to implement it.

2. Are there any updates or changes to the SAFE framework?

SFA will engage the industry on the SAFE framework and will provide an update when ready.

3. What is SAFE?

The Safety Assurance for Food Establishments (SAFE) framework is a new licensing framework to provide better food safety assurance to consumers.

Under the proposed framework, food establishments will be eligible for higher award tiers if:

- They have demonstrated good track record of food safety assurance (i.e. no major food safety lapse over a period of time); and/or
- They have in place capabilities and systems to ensure better food safety standards (e.g. appointment of Advanced Food Hygiene Officer, implementation of Food Safety Management System).

4. How is SAFE better than the previous grading framework?

Under the previous framework, on-site assessments of SFA-licensed food establishments are carried out annually to determine their grade based on food safety standards, which is a snapshot assessment of their food safety performance.

The SAFE framework will provide a better representation of the food establishments' consistent efforts in ensuring and maintaining food safety. Under the SAFE framework, food establishments that have demonstrated good track record of food safety assurance and/or have in place capabilities and systems to ensure better food safety standards will be given recognition.

5. Will food farms be under the SAFE framework?

No, the SAFE framework will not be applicable to those issued with a farm licence.

6. What will happen to food establishments which were on board the voluntary Food Hygiene Recognition Scheme (FHRS)?

The SAFE framework will supersede the FHRS. All licensees on the FHRS will transit to the SAFE framework when the SAFE framework is implemented. For existing food establishments which were on board the FHRS, the licensee will continue to be able to

see their FHR award on LicenceOne, and this FHR award will continue to be displayed on the track record page on SFA's website.

7. How will food safety oversight be maintained without an annual grading?

The licensee of the food establishment is responsible for ensuring that food is produced/prepared in a safe manner and is fit for consumption. This includes compliance with:

- Requirements stipulated in the legislations administered by the Singapore Food Agency
- Licensing requirements, such as engaging trained food handlers and putting in place systems and infrastructural designs to mitigate risks of food contamination during production, preparation, packing, storage, and transportation of food.

SFA will continue to ensure food safety and public health through regulatory checks of food establishments.

[Cessation of Grading]

8. I'm an existing licensee. What will happen to my grade given the cessation of grading?

All existing licences expiring on or after 1 July 2021 will be renewed with no change in grade. To illustrate, if your previous grade was grade "A", you will retain grade "A". Licensees associated with foodborne incidents may still receive a "C" grade, after SFA's investigation.

9. I'm a new licensee. Why am I given a provisional "B" grade? Can I request for SFA to re-grade my premise?

As SFA transits to the SAFE framework, grading assessments for food establishments have ceased. New licences will be issued with a provisional "B" grade until the SAFE framework is implemented.

10. If I get downgraded for a foodborne incident to grade C, will I remain at a grade C perpetually?

Licences downgraded to "C" will retain the "C" grade for a period of 12 months, after which the grade will be adjusted to "B". Barring a downgrade due to another foodborne incident, licensees will retain this "B" grade until the implementation of the SAFE framework.

[Award/Licence Tiering]

11. Will the SAFE framework include hawker stalls? Can they qualify for Award and longer licence tenure as well?

Yes. Cooked food stalls in NEA-managed hawker centres will also be included in the SAFE framework.

[Food Hygiene Officer (FHO)]

12. Which types of food establishments require a Food Hygiene Officer (FHO)? How many FHOs are required at each establishment?

Currently, food manufacturers, cold stores and retail food establishments that are involved in large-scale food preparation or have multiple food stalls are required to appoint a trained FHO for each licensed premises. These retail food establishments include restaurants (housed in two or more adjacent units in private and HDB shophouses or with kitchen area exceeding 16m²), caterers, canteens, and food courts.

[FSMS, Accredited FSMS]

13. What is the difference between a Food Safety Management System (FSMS) and an accredited FSMS?

An accredited FSMS certification refers to an organisation's FSMS that is certified by a certification body, which is:

- Accredited by the Singapore Accreditation Council (SAC) for ISO 22000, SS 590 and SS 444; or
- Accredited by accreditation bodies which are signatories of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) multilateral recognition arrangement (MLA) for ISO 22000 and FSSC 22000; or
- Accredited by Brand Reputation Compliance Global Standards (BRCGS)-recognised accreditation bodies which are signatories of the IAF MLA

The list of FSMS certification currently recognised to have met the criteria for Category A food establishments is as follows:

- SS444
- SS590
- ISO 22000
- FSSC 22000
- BRC Global Food Standards

[Food Safety Courses (FSC)]

Training requirements for food handlers and supervisory personnel

14. Is there specific training required for personnel handling food?

All food handlers will be required to attend and pass the WSQ Food Safety Course (FSC) Level 1. The course covers basic food safety principles for food handlers. Food handlers who had passed WSQ FSC Level 1 and wish to receive additional training on conducting food safety checks at their specific work areas may attend WSQ FSC Level 2.

To ensure sustained awareness on good food safety and hygiene practices, food handlers are required to attend refresher training to continue to be eligible to work as food handlers. Food handlers with WSQ FSC Level 1 or Level 2 certificates are required to attend their first refresher training at the 5th year mark from their WSQ FSC Level 1 or

WSQ FSC Level 2 course pass date, and their second and subsequent training at the 10th year mark from the last refresher training course pass date.

Detailed information for food handlers, the training requirements and WSQ FSC Level 1 and Level 2 can be found on <https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-retail/information-for-food-handlers/food-retail/information-for-food-handlers>.

15. Is there specific training required for supervisory personnel?

Supervisory personnel appointed as Food Hygiene Officers (FHOs) are required to pass the WSQ Food Safety Course Level 3, which will equip them with knowledge on pre-requisite programmes, Food Safety Management System (FSMS) and on conducting food safety checks.

FHOs who have previously passed the “WSQ Conduct Food and Beverage Hygiene Audit Course” or have been trained under the FHO course conducted by the Singapore Environment Institute (SEI) will continue to be recognised by SFA. Detailed information on FHOs and WSQ FSC Level 3 can be found on <https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-retail/information-for-food-hygiene-officers/information-for-food-hygiene-officers>.

Supervisory personnel appointed as Advanced FHOs are required to pass the WSQ FSC Level 4 course, which will equip them with knowledge on developing, implementing, auditing and managing a FSMS. Supervisory personnel who have passed the former WSQ Apply Food Safety Management Systems for Food Service Establishments Course will continue to be recognised by SFA and can be appointed as an Advanced FHO.

Detailed information on Advanced FHOs and WSQ FSC Level 4 can be found on <https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-retail/food-safety-management-system/training-wsq-food-safety-course-level-4>.

16. How much will the WSQ Food Safety Course Level 1 to Level 4 cost? Will SFA pay for the courses?

The course fees are determined by the training providers accredited by SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG). Qualified trainees aged 21 and above may apply for subsidies from SSG. Members of the public who wish to reskill or upskill themselves to join the food industry may also use their SkillsFuture credits to cover the course fees.

17. Are the Food Safety Courses a one-off training to qualify to work in the food industry?

For WSQ Food Safety Course (FSC) Level 1, it is SFA’s requirement that food handlers are required to attend refresher training for sustained awareness on good food safety practices to continue to be eligible to work as food handlers. For the first refresher training, it should be at the 5th year mark from WSQ FSC Level 1 or Level 2 course pass date, and every 10th year for subsequent refresher trainings.

For FHOs with WSQ FSC Level 3 certificate and Advanced FHOs with WSQ FSC Level 4 certificate, although refresher training is not required, it is recommended for FHOs and Advanced FHOs to stay current and keep abreast with evolving food industry landscape. However, if the FHO’s course of work involves food handling, he/she will need to attend refresher training at the 5th year mark from the date he/she passes WSQ FSC Level.

The second and subsequent refresher training must be taken every 10th year from last refresher training course pass date, if the FHO continues to work as a food handler.

Detailed information on the refresher training for food handler roles can be found on <https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-retail/information-for-food-handlers/food-retail/information-for-food-handlers>

18. Where can I find the list of training providers for WSQ Food Safety Courses Level 1 to Level 4?

The list of training providers for WSQ FSC Level 1 to Level 4 can be accessed via:

Course	SFA website link
WSQ Food Safety Course Level 1	https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-retail/information-for-food-handlers/information-for-food-handlers
WSQ Food Safety Course Level 2	
WSQ Food Safety Course Level 3	https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-retail/information-for-food-hygiene-officers/information-for-food-hygiene-officers
WSQ Food Safety Course Level 4	https://www.sfa.gov.sg/food-retail/food-safety-management-system/training-wsq-food-safety-course-level-4

19. I have previously passed the WSQ Apply Food Safety Management Systems for Food Service Establishments course. Do I still need to attend WSQ Food Safety Course Level 4 to be appointed an Advanced FHO?

Supervisory personnel who have passed the WSQ Apply Food Safety Management Systems for Food Service Establishments will continue to be recognised by SFA and can be appointed as an Advanced FHO.

20. If a staff has the relevant academic qualifications or competencies, would he need to complete WSQ Food Safety Course Level 3 and 4 to be appointed FHO and Advanced FHO respectively?

To be appointed an FHO, the staff could opt to take the WSQ Food Safety Course Level 3 Assessment-Only-Pathway (AOP) instead of attending the entire WSQ FSC Level 3. The assessment would include written and practical (mock-up inspection) assessments. To be appointed an Advanced FHO, the staff could opt to take the WSQ Food Safety Course Level 4 Assessment-Only-Pathway (AOP) instead of attending the entire WSQ FSC Level 4. The assessment would include written and practical (on-site inspection) assessments.

[Others]

21. Will home-based food businesses be subjected to SAFE framework?

The SAFE framework will be implemented for all food establishments licensed by SFA. Home-based food businesses under HDB/URA's Home-based Business Scheme currently do not require a licence from SFA. Nonetheless, operators of home-based food businesses are strongly encouraged to adopt SFA's guidelines on good food hygiene

practices. Persons who prepare food under this scheme are encouraged to attend the WSQ FSC Level 1.

22. What will happen to the Food Safety Excellence Awards and Food Safety Partnership?

SFA has discontinued the Food Safety Excellence Awards and Food Safety Partnership, which were previously administered by the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority. Accordingly, SFA has informed companies under both schemes that certification marks associated with the Food Safety Excellence Awards and Food Safety Partnership will be phased out by **Dec 2023**, after which the usage of these certification marks in product packaging, delivery vehicles and publicity materials will not be allowed.

23. How do the Food Safety Awards compare with the SAFE framework?

The Food Safety Awards relied on the annual grading inspections which provided a snapshot of the food establishment's food safety performance. Annual grading inspections have ceased since 2021.

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24. How will SAFE impact the criteria for participation in schemes and programmes under other agencies e.g., ESG's Tasty Singapore brand / VITAL's Government Demand Aggregation (DA) contracts?

The qualifying criteria for Tasty Singapore brand and the Government DA contracts will continue to be maintained until further announcements. For further enquiries, you may submit your questions via the SFA feedback page here: www.sfa.gov.sg/feedback.